United Nations A/C.3/67/SR.14

General Assembly
Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

Distr.: General
4 January 2013

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 14th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 18 October 2012, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Mac-Donald ..... (Suriname)
later: Mr. Sparber (Vice-Chair) ..... (Liechtenstein)

Contents

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

12-55520 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/67/41, A/67/225, A/67/256, A/67/230 and A/67/291)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/67/229)

1. **Ms. M'jid Maalla** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography), introducing her report (A/67/291), said that she would concentrate on part II, relating to the participation of children as a key component of a comprehensive system to protect them from exploitation. Children's right to be heard was a guiding principle of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Child participation had been a recommendation of the World Congresses against Sexual Exploitation of Children and the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children.

2. Although child- and adolescent-led initiatives had been supported and children's representative bodies had been set up in many countries, challenges remained: child participation was not systematic and did not always follow international principles; there was cultural resistance to children's right to self-expression and problems related to children's access to information; there were insufficient spaces for children to express themselves safely and a lack of resources and skills among the adults responsible for listening to, informing and consulting children. Although children and young people were familiar with technological developments, they often played only a small role in strategies against online pornography. The participation of vulnerable children and victims in structures representing children remained low. In many countries there was no protection for victims during legal proceedings and in some countries victims could be punished even though they were under 18. Those children who were consulted did not always receive feedback on their participation. Monitoring and evaluation were inadequate to documenting the impact of initiatives.

3. To overcome those obstacles, child participation should be considered a core component of a rights-based child protection system. Such participation included information, hearing/listening, consultation, taking children's opinions into consideration, and support for children's initiatives. Participation should be institutionalized, with appropriate legislative changes and resources to provide children with access to information without discrimination and involve them in producing materials. Participation should be voluntary and informed, and encouraged through awareness-raising. The protection of child victims and witnesses should be guaranteed and equal representation of girls and vulnerable children ensured. Child-led initiatives should be supported. Monitoring and evaluation was needed, with systematic child participation, and children should be informed of the use to be made of their contribution.

4. Since the exploitation of children was a transnational phenomenon, the participation of all actors was needed to protect them. The 2008 Rio de Janeiro Declaration and Call for Action to Prevent and Stop Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents had recommended the establishment of a global coordination framework that included child-led organizations.

5. An appropriate process for child participation would help to strengthen their resilience and ability to overcome trauma and better protect themselves and their peers against all forms of exploitation and abuse.

6. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union) asked what child-targeted mechanisms could be developed to raise awareness regarding the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

7. *Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

8. **Mr. El Mkhantar** (Morocco) asked what measures were taken by Governments to involve civil society in the mapping of child participation, and how receptive they were to such mapping.

9. **Ms. Murillo** (Costa Rica) requested further information about the concept of child participation and its basis in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

10. **Ms. M'jid Maalla** (Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) said that awareness-raising measures against the sexual exploitation of children often took the form of sporadic campaigns, whereas such exploitation was complex and multidimensional. All possible means should therefore be used to raise

awareness, in particular the Internet and the communications media. Sexual exploitation persisted because it was socially tolerated; it was therefore necessary to work with communities to produce social norms which protected children's rights.

11. Since the Internet, sex tourism and the sale of children were transnational phenomena, the international community's involvement through harmonized legal frameworks was essential. The regular exchange of up-to-date information, expertise and practices was also needed.

12. Many States had action plans for the implementation of mapping but suffered from coordination and resource problems. The feedback from her country visits had indicated that the concept of mapping had been well received. Its implementation required time, support and the mobilization of United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the country and regional offices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Mapping should be in place by 2015 in order to build a world fit for children and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

13. The principles of the participative process set out in the report were that children should be given correct information using language they understood. They should be listened to, heard and consulted, and their opinions should be taken into consideration in the development of programmes and evaluations. They needed feedback on what was done with their contributions. They should be enabled to take more responsibility and become actors in the protection of their rights and those of their parents. It should be guaranteed that they would not be victimized because of their participation. Qualified human resources should be provided. Children's participation should be evaluated to determine whether or not it should be strengthened or improved.

14. **Mr. Goddard** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that CARICOM members were committed to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, "A world fit for children". Eight members had acceded to or ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and six had agreed to be bound by the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. He drew attention to General Assembly resolution 66/138, establishing the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

15. CARICOM had sponsored the resolution calling for the International Day of the Girl Child, and welcomed the celebration of the first such International Day in 2012. It denounced the attempted assassination of Malala Youssafzai of Pakistan, which showed that much remained to be done to ensure respect for girls' rights.

16. Coordinated action was needed to improve the situation of children in the CARICOM region. With the help of development partners including UNICEF, progress had been made in the priority areas of the Regional Framework for Action for Children.

17. Despite progress, work remained to be done on child health, and children would be the focus of Caribbean Wellness Day 2012. CARICOM reiterated its concern over childhood obesity, which was a threat to development and should be addressed in the broader context of non-communicable diseases. The February and July 2012 meetings of the CARICOM Council for Human and Social Development had been focused on children and youth.

18. Violence against children was being addressed as a matter of urgency. A subregional consultation had been held in Jamaica in May 2012 to help CARICOM members follow up on the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children. As a follow-up to the 2011 and 2012 regional meetings convened by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Latin America and the Caribbean, CARICOM was co-sponsoring a meeting of regional organizations on violence against children, to be held in New York in October 2012.

19. At their thirty-third regular meeting in July 2012, the CARICOM Heads of Government had called for a holistic approach to child abuse, including parenting education, awareness-raising and legislative reform to protect children and deal with perpetrators and those who supported abuse through silence. The most critical issue discussed at the twenty-third meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development in July 2012 had been violence against children and youth.

The Council had called for studies to inform policy and interventions against violence in schools, had reaffirmed members' commitment to the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children, and had agreed to bring the investigation of child sexual abuse cases into line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

20. CARICOM members and other sponsors of the 2012 omnibus resolution on the rights of the child had recommended that the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children should be extended for a further three years. CARICOM would continue to strive for a region fit for children, in which their rights were upheld.

21. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the Community had adopted a Business Plan on Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth for 2009-2015, under which members had taken measures to combat violence against children. They had introduced health, education and food security programmes under their poverty reduction strategies and made a commitment under the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015) to ensure safety at school, access to education and stronger education management information systems, along with sport and extracurricular activities for children.

22. The members supported the findings of the annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (A/67/230). They had therefore acceded to bilateral agreements against the sexual exploitation of children and coordinated their actions through the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs' Coordination Organization.

23. Certain members had implemented initiatives to protect child-headed households, the number of which had increased owing to HIV/AIDS. The Community had adopted a strategic framework for the mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS into its development agenda.

24. The Community had adopted a 10-year Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which addressed trafficking comprehensively, as set out in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children, and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

25. SADC members worked with their partners to mobilize resources and allocate them to structures supporting vulnerable children. They agreed that good data and research were needed for planning, policymaking and resource allocation, and thanked UNICEF for its support in that domain.

26. **Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said that the Group wished to stress the importance of respect for religious, ethical and societal values and the sovereignty of States when it came to social issues and standards of behaviour.

27. During the previous decade, most Arab countries had expanded their legislative and institutional frameworks for the protection of the rights of children, and Arab civil society organizations had become more active in raising awareness and providing assistance to children in need. The League of Arab States had encouraged and supported efforts to improve the condition of children in the Arab region, in keeping with Arab values and in implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. At its 2012 summit in Baghdad, the League had endorsed the outcome document of the Fourth High-level Arab Conference on Children's Rights held in Morocco in 2010 as a platform for action to promote child education, early childhood development, child health care, protection of children from violence and discrimination, and the nurturing of the culture and identity of the Arab child. In September 2012, the League had announced that it would conduct a study, which would be the first of its kind, on the role of the Arab media in promoting children's rights.

28. At regional conferences on violence against children in the Middle East and North Africa, the Arab States had affirmed their commitment to work for the elimination of all forms of violence against children on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of the Comparative Arab Report on Implementing the Recommendations of the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. The Arab States were committed to working in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

29. The Group stressed that religions encouraged the protection of children, and it condemned the use of religion to justify violence against children as in the case of the recent attack on the Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Youssafzai in retaliation for her defence of girls' education. Equal access to education for girls was an investment in the future. A special framework needed to be developed to protect children living under Israeli occupation in Occupied Palestinian Territory, the occupied Syrian Golan and the occupied Lebanese areas of Ghajar, Shab'a Farms and Kafr Shuba. Those children should be able to enjoy a life free of violence, torture and abuse, and should not be forced to study a curriculum imposed by the occupation authorities. Palestinian children had a right to enjoy all their basic rights and freedoms in an independent state of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital, and Syrian and Lebanese children had a right to celebrate their national identities and to live in a world free of mines and cluster bombs. The group welcomed the appointment of Leila Zerrougui as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and called on her to devote greater attention to the condition of children in occupied Arab territories.

30. **Mr. Vrailas** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the requirement for the European Union to protect the rights of the child, set out in the Treaty on European Union, was embodied by the 2011 European Union Agenda for the Rights of the Child, which contained 11 actions designed to contribute to children's well-being. The 2012 European Forum on the Rights of the Child would focus on child protection systems. The European Union had adopted a four-year Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors in 2010, and had contributed €70 million to UNICEF in 2011.

31. It had launched a campaign for the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and of International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour. It reiterated its call to States parties to withdraw any reservations to the Convention and Protocols, and underlined the importance of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. The European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights required it to take children's views into consideration, and it would collect data on its members' legislation, policy and practice in order to uphold the right of children to be heard.

32. The European Union welcomed Security Council resolution 2068 (2012) on children and armed conflict and reaffirmed its commitment to resolutions 1612 (2005), 1820 (2008), 1882 (2009) and 1998 (2011). His delegation supported the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and would strive to improve the lives of children in line with the 2010 Review of the Implementation Strategy for the European Union Guidelines on Children in Armed Conflicts.

33. The European Union addressed the problem of violence against children through external action and internal funding programmes, with the Internet becoming a greater focus. The protection of the victims of child trafficking and better cooperation with third countries and international organizations were essential to the new European Union Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016. A study was under way to collect data on children in judicial proceedings in the European Union, and a Directive had been proposed on support for the victims of crime.

34. His delegation thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children for her work and called for the extension of her mandate.

35. The 2012 omnibus resolution on the rights of the child would be presented by the European Union and the Latin American and Caribbean Group, and would focus on indigenous children, an area in which more effort was needed according to the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/225). Indigenous people constituted 15 per cent of the world's poor. Education was essential to improving the situation of indigenous children and enhancing understanding of their cultures. Indigenous rights had been given a high priority under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. The European Union supported the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In June 2012 it had introduced a Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, promoting children's rights and

strengthening indigenous peoples' rights. It would review its current policy in the context of the United Nations Declaration and in preparation for the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

36. Despite progress in child mortality and education in the context of the MDGs, more should be done to reduce poverty. Children's rights should be included in the development agenda beyond 2015, and the European Commission would adopt a recommendation on child poverty in the coming months.

37. **Ms. Hoffmann** (Liechtenstein) said that her delegation welcomed the focus in the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/225) on the rights of indigenous children, who faced discrimination and required protection. Indigenous peoples were disproportionately affected by poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Her delegation called for them to be included in the development agenda beyond 2015 and hoped that the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples would contribute to that end.

38. Her Government supported projects to educate rural women and children. To enable indigenous children to participate in decisions affecting them and ensure their access to education and State protection, their births should be registered. Harmful traditional practices such as female infanticide, child and forced marriages, prenatal sex selection and female genital mutilation should be prevented, and the attitudes of men and boys should be changed to protect girls from such practices. Access to health care and sexual and reproductive health information should be improved.

39. Her delegation was concerned about the number of persistent perpetrators listed in the annexes to the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (A/66/782-S/2012/261) and called on the Security Council to strengthen accountability. The International Criminal Court had proved its vital role in March 2012 by convicting Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of child recruitment. Her delegation called on the United Nations to support the strengthening of national courts where requested. In partnership with Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, her Government had developed a mobile application to provide policymakers with documents for negotiating peacekeeping mandates.

40. **Ms. Fahmy** (Egypt) said that her country was making efforts dedicated to ending child marriage and promoting the education of girls, in particular through an important legislative amendment that had raised the minimum age of marriage for girls. An initiative in place since 2003 aimed to eradicate female illiteracy, prevent girls from dropping out of primary school and reduce the numbers of girls and young women dropping out of secondary and university education, and "girl-friendly" schools had proven successful in that regard. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had recommended implementation of the initiative in various regions of the world.

41. Egypt attached special importance to the elimination of female genital mutilation. The draft resolution on intensifying the global effort to eliminate female genital mutilation submitted by the African Group was a reflection of its strong commitment to eliminate all harmful practices affecting the health of women and girls. Successful strategies to end female genital mutilation required integration of legislative, health, educational and social components, as well as awareness-raising. The cultural and social sensitivities associated with the practice must be taken into account.

42. The report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict highlighted, for the second year, the excessive targeting of and attacks on schools and hospitals in various parts of the world. Egypt strongly condemned all practices that targeted children, either as combatants or as exploited victims of conflicts. Criminalizing all violations against children in armed conflicts and ending perpetrators' impunity was an important deterrent.

43. Egypt was deeply concerned about attacks on schools and military use of schools by Israeli security forces in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, attacks perpetrated by Israeli settlers on schools and children, including by physically assaulting Palestinian children on their way to school. Children were also arrested and placed in detention, which prevented children living under Israeli occupation from enrolling in school and deepened their psychological and physical suffering.

44. **Ms. Sandoval** (Nicaragua) reiterated her country's firm commitment to implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols and other relevant international instruments. The Government recognized that restoring the rights of children and adolescents was the shared responsibility of the State, the family and the wider community, and it was thus implementing the National Human Development Plan, which defined the main strategies

and actions for capacity-building and eliminating exclusion and inequality. Inasmuch as half the population was under age 18, the Plan made children a national priority and aimed to restore all their basic rights through programmes such as the "Programa Amor", which catered to populations in situations of social risk based on age group and needs (children without birth certificates, children of migrants and prisoners, orphans, children of single working mothers).

45. The Programme had shown promising results in Nicaraguan families: an unprecedented 95,202 children under 12 had been registered between 2008 and 2011; 425,000 home visits had been conducted to encourage parents to adopt early stimulation methods and to inculcate the values of respect and solidarity; 8,700 children regularly attended 61 day-care centres; 2,153 parents were enrolled in adult education programmes, while 8,843 participated in parenting schools. In addition, 18,211 children benefited from agreements to cover maintenance payments. Progress had also been made to provide care for street children, particularly those with no family ties and those with drug problems; the number of children in orphanages had been reduced from 4,300 to 1,080, of whom 600 were adolescents or had a disability.

46. As part of efforts to reform the Nicaraguan social model and eradicate poverty progressively with a special focus on early childhood, an early childhood policy had been developed that illustrated the shift in both focus and actions — families were being shown that it was possible to raise children with love and respect. The Government had restructured the entire social welfare system, with each institution carrying out its proper role. Through the early childhood intervention programme, the Government would reach some 900,000 families nationwide in 2013.

47. Nicaragua welcomed the recent observance of the International Day of the Girl Child as an opportunity to promote the restoration of girls' rights and would continue to implement programmes that would give its youth a better future that was not only possible, but necessary.

48. **Ms. Udommongkolkul** (Thailand) said that her country considered universal State-provided health care, including health care for children, a human right. In some pockets of the country, however, children's health care required special attention, and access to the universal, free health-care programme, which included prenatal and postnatal care, vaccination and nutrition, was being enhanced.

49. Over the past two years, child malnutrition had been continuously reduced, and there had been measures, supported by UNICEF, to address iodine and iron deficiencies. A 15-year, free, universal education programme was being implemented. Special efforts had been made to reach out to children in rural areas, and multilingual schools had been set up, especially in areas with high concentrations of ethnic minorities and migrants. There were special education centres for disabled children in every province.

50. Violence against children remained an important challenge for Thailand that required effective law enforcement. A law against trafficking in persons had been enacted in 2008. In 2010, the law on juvenile and family court had been amended to include new definitions of "child" and "juvenile" that were more in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Other changes included a requirement that child offenders must be brought to juvenile and family court within 24 hours, and that the court could issue a protection order for a child prior to the commencement of legal proceedings. Therapy had replaced criminal punishment, and police stations were to have special investigation rooms for children.

51. Thailand was the first country in the world to become a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, reflecting its willingness to listen and to give voice to the voiceless, particularly children themselves.

52. **Ms. Man** Anting (China) urged developed countries to honour their commitments to increase substantive financial and technical support to the developing countries in order to minimize the impact on children of poverty, hunger, disease, disasters, child labour, drugs, sexual violence, war and conflict. Developing countries were encouraged to share their experiences in order to create better conditions for children's development.

53. The Chinese Government had implemented a development strategy that made children a priority and had a complete legal system on the protection of the rights of the child. Plans for child development in China included specific requirements for implementing nutrition and health programmes for preschool children

in poor areas, special care to vulnerable groups, including orphans, children with disabilities and street children and bans on foetal sex identification and illegal abortion.

54. Her Government attached great importance to the international human rights instruments relating to the rights of the child and had met its treaty obligations in that area. It was planning activities to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of its accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child during 2012.

55. **Ms. Razzouk** (United States of America) said that the brutal shooting of young Malala Youssafzai by extremist thugs who believed that girls did not have the right to an education served as a reminder of the challenges confronting girls every day. Those challenges included a lack of opportunities for education and basic health care, food and nutrition, discrimination and violence.

56. Equal access to education was part of the solution to child marriage. Elevating the status of girls was critical to achieving prosperity, stability and security. An estimated 10 million girls were married each year before the age of 18; often they were even younger. Early marriage threatened girls' health and education and robbed them of the opportunity to reach their full potential. The Special Rapporteur on the Islamic Republic of Iran had documented marriages of Iranian girls as young as 9 years old.

57. The United States of America was committed to addressing and preventing early or forced marriage and would intensify its diplomacy and development efforts to end the practice. Under a new initiative to address that threat to girls and to global development, her Government would report on child marriage in its annual country reports on human rights practices.

58. The United States, home to over 2 million Native Americans, was committed to working with tribes, individuals and communities to address challenges faced by indigenous children. A strong cultural identity provided indigenous children with a source of stability and strength.

59. Her delegation expressed its agreement with the Special Representative on violence against children that reducing such violence was crucial to economic development, and that such issues must be addressed starting in early childhood and leading to fulfilment in a quality education. Syrian children, however, were the victims of killing and maiming, arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and ill-treatment, including sexual violence, on a daily basis. Some had been used as human shields, and there had been an alarming increase in the frequency of the atrocities over the past 18 months. Her Government would continue to work with the international community to ensure that human rights were a reality for all children.

60. **Ms. Ribeiro** (Brazil) said that Brazil had recently signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, which allowed individual children to submit complaints regarding specific violations of their rights under the Convention. Brazil had been one of the first Member States to enact a specific set of laws on the rights of the child, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It had recently passed laws to enhance the administration of justice for children. The new approach incorporated human rights concerns and aimed to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents who had violated the law. It contained a recommendation that penalties should be individualized and took into account such factors as disabilities and chemical dependencies.

61. The President of Brazil had recently launched a new federal programme that would increase the number of day-care centres, strengthen national health programme coverage and provide for the distribution of medicines to treat asthma and combat vitamin A deficiency. Brazil had also set up a 24-hour national telephone hotline and campaign programme to assist victims of child exploitation.

62. Cooperation with neighbouring countries had proven critical in addressing such issues as sexual violence and sexual exploitation, which, by their very nature, transcended national boundaries. Venezuela and 10 other countries in South America had pooled efforts to prevent sexual exploitation of children and adolescents by tourists.

63. **Ms. Khalidi** (Malaysia) said that education and training consistently received the largest allocation in her country's national budget. The Government allocation to the Ministry of Education for education and training programmes for 2013 was approximately $12 billion, or 21 per cent of the annual budget. Malaysia provided free primary and secondary education for all of its citizens.

64. Malaysia had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995 and to the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in April 2012. The National Policy on Children and its Plan of Action focused on development relating to children's survival, protection, development and participation as provided for in that Convention. The National Child Protection Policy and its Plan of Action aimed to ensure that children were protected from all forms of neglect, abuse, violence and exploitation and focused on prevention, advocacy, intervention, reporting and provision of support services in protecting children. There were 11 shelter homes and community-based rehabilitation centres for neglected, abused, abandoned and orphaned children, providing diagnosis, rehabilitation, treatment and special education services.

65. Lastly, she noted that for the first time, Malaysia had proposed a candidate for the December 2012 elections to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

66. **Ms. Hernando** (Philippines) said that her country's Constitution granted paramount importance to the protection of the rights of the child and mandated the State to promote and protect their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual and social well-being.

67. In 2006, the minimum age of criminal responsibility in the country had been raised from 9 years of age to 15. Other important national laws had promulgated a national system for ensuring newborn screening; instituted policies to eliminate trafficking in persons; penalized people who used children in prostitution and other sexual abuses and prohibited the use of children in armed combat, inter alia.

68. The Department of Health received an allotment of 11 per cent of the Government's entire budget for the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and Nutrition Programme. There were programmes to protect against child labour and abuse and to legitimize children born to parents below marriageable age. A conditional cash transfer programme for poor households helped to keep children in school.

69. The involvement of children in armed conflict was an issue of great importance to the Philippines. With the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, whose office played a central role in promoting transparent, balanced actions to lift children out of violence and promote and protect their rights, the Philippines looked forward to more meaningful interaction and a truly objective and transparent engagement with stakeholders.

70. Engagement with non-State armed groups, including for the purpose of child protection, should be approached with caution. Any strategy to protect children should be in harmony with the larger peace processes in the country. The Philippines was determined to take steps to be delisted from annex II of the Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

71. **Mr. Samarasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that his country was currently focused on building a succeeding generation ready to take over the reins of the country free from fear of terrorism. Foremost among the country's achievements were the rehabilitation and reintegration of child combatants into society. As of 1 October 2012, 594 child soldiers had been rehabilitated and reintegrated, with not a single child combatant in rehabilitative care or legal custody. Ex-combatant children were not subjected to legal proceedings, based on the rationale that they were victims, not perpetrators. All child soldiers released were afforded the opportunity of a formal education and reunited with their families. Sri Lanka had been delisted from annex II of Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, following inquiries into several cases on child recruitment and compliance with recommendations of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Over 200 former combatants had been reinducted into the university system to continue their undergraduate studies.

72. At the end of the war, some children among the internally displaced persons had been separated from their families, or families had reported missing children to the authorities. A unit for family tracing and reunification for unaccompanied and separated children had been established with UNICEF support.

73. Women's and children's desks had been established at police stations to provide protection to women and children who had suffered acts of violence. Where such desks did not exist, arrangements had been

made at police stations to assign female officers to assist women and child complainants.

74. Schools had been strictly instructed to prohibit the use of corporal punishment. A law against domestic violence had recently been passed and the employment of children under the age of 14 had been prohibited.

75. The National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, through its specific thematic section on children, was intended to ensure that that precious resource would be protected, empowered and equipped to face the future.

76. **Mr. Valero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the representatives of capitalism expected the poorest and most vulnerable in society to pay for the economic crisis they had caused, which had led to growing poverty and inequality and lack of social progress. The effects of the crisis on children's rights had been especially drastic. The situation must be reversed and the fundamental human rights of children and adolescents guaranteed.

77. In Venezuela, social investment had become a key strategy for development and for achieving the MDGs, with social policies primarily aimed at providing comprehensive care for the most vulnerable. Significant and measurable achievements had been made in reducing poverty and inequality and recent data from the country's National Institute of Statistics showed that the percentage of poor households had dropped from 43.9 per cent in 1998 to 26.7 per cent in 2011, with extreme poverty falling from 25 per cent in 2003 to 7 per cent in 2011. The Bolivarian Revolution had placed children's rights at the centre of social policies: comprehensive preventive health-care programmes, coupled with large-scale construction of first-class hospitals, had reduced infant mortality by 27 per cent since 1998. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) figures showed a reduction in child nutritional deficiency indicators to 3.2 per cent, meeting the MDGs. The new Labour Act (2012) facilitated breastfeeding by extending paid maternity leave to six weeks prenatal leave and 20 weeks postnatal leave. Education was a right and a duty: the goal of universal primary education had been met, with a net enrolment rate of 94 per cent. Venezuela ranked second in Latin America and fifth in the world in terms of university enrolment.

78. The Child Protection Act, adopted in 2000, complied with the obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and guaranteed a number of freedoms for children and adolescents while protecting them from exploitation, trafficking and forced labour. A total of 164 children's courts had been established and the "Misión Niños del Barrio" programme had been created in 2008 to protect street children. The national council for the rights of children and young people and committees for their social protection had been set up to strengthen the role of the State in that area. Twenty-three years after adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Venezuela continued to fulfil its obligations, recognizing children and adolescents as developing persons with their own rights.

79. **Mr. Rakovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that despite the economic and financial crisis, material support to families with many children was increasing in the Russian Federation, with particular attention paid to children with disabilities and neglected, abused, abandoned or orphaned children.

80. Recently a law had been adopted to protect children from dangerous content accessible through information technologies that contained scenes of aggression or violence, led to immoral behaviour or encouraged children to use drugs, alcohol or tobacco or engage in prostitution or gambling.

81. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had recently signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The relevant special plan of action was now being drafted within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The Russian Federation was a recent signatory to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

82. The staff of the Office of the President included an aide who specialized in the rights of the child and had broad powers to monitor the relevant activities of State and civic organizations. Reporting to that aide was a children's ombudsman. Monitoring of compliance with children's rights therefore took place at the very highest level of Government.

83. The increasingly frequent removal of Russian-Finnish children from their families by Finnish authorities was grounds for concern. Such actions had negative consequences for the development and well-being of the children involved, and ran counter to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, whose preamble

stated, in part, that "the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community".

84. **Ms. Adeyemi** (Nigeria) said that since passage of the Child Rights Act in 2003, Nigeria had made significant progress, particularly in the provision of health care and education for children. In Nigeria, there were some 75 million children under 18, of whom 17.5 million were orphans or disabled. Special programmes to protect the rights and meet the needs of those vulnerable children were developed at the federal level.

85. To date, 23 Nigerian states had domesticated the Child Rights Act, and efforts were being made to encourage the remaining 13 to accelerate passage of the Act into law in their territories. More attention was also being focused on advancement of the girl child through education and abolition of all forms of discriminatory cultural practices.

86. The establishment of the Children's Parliament at the national and state levels had given Nigerian children the freedom to exercise their civic responsibilities and to enjoy broad expression of their views on issues of concern to them, their community and their country. Children contributed directly to policy formulation and implementation.

87. The Presidential Committee on Security had a representative of the Children's Parliament as a member. Nigeria was also reviewing its laws on intercountry adoption to bring them into conformity with the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption. Steps were being taken to establish family courts so that cases involving children were no longer dealt with in conventional courts.

88. Under an agreement signed by the Government of Nigeria, the International Labour Organization and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, shelters were being established to rehabilitate and reintegrate rescued trafficked children with their families. Human trafficking must be addressed not only through law enforcement actions, but also through policies aimed at prevention and, most important, protection of the victim.

89. **Ms. Sumi** (Japan) said that information technology and globalization had led to children's rights violations which crossed national borders. Her Government had strengthened cooperation to eliminate human trafficking in accordance with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children. It had introduced the 2009 Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons and had enacted comprehensive measures for the eradication of child pornography.

90. Governments should ensure respect for the rights of girls and children with disabilities. Her Government provided home visits to households with infants to secure a sound environment for their development and supported local childcare projects. Japan was committed to building a society in which children could enjoy all their rights and could have hope.

91. **Ms. Thomas** (Cuba) said that recent UNICEF data showed that one in six children in developing countries was forced to work, usually for low salaries and with no protection, in such sectors as mining and agriculture. Worldwide, 20,000 children died every day, one in three of them from malnutrition. Much needed to be done to achieve MDG 4 (Reduce the under-five mortality rate by two thirds by 2015) and improve school enrolment.

92. Her Government had been a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1991, but had been applying policies aimed at children since the 1959 Revolution. The structural injustices inherited from colonial and neocolonial domination were a thing of the past, and the rights of the child were a top priority. Her Government's free national health and education systems were essential to upholding those rights, and 52 per cent of the State budget was allocated to health, education and social services. The child mortality rate was 4.7 for every 1,000 live births, compared to 60 before 1959. Mothers and children received priority care, primary care was incorporated into the hospital infrastructure, children were vaccinated against 13 communicable diseases and early detection was available for congenital illnesses. Special needs education coverage was 100 per cent.

93. Her Government had exceeded the objectives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Education for All programme and had achieved MDGs 3 and 4 despite the blockade by the United States of America, to which the

international community demanded an end every year through the General Assembly. Although $10 million had been allocated to the public health system since 2011, hospitals faced obstacles in purchasing children's medical supplies made in the United States.

94. Until policies of international cooperation and solidarity were applied, and as long as a few became rich while millions suffered from poverty, the future of humanity would remain under threat.

95. **Prince** Jalal **Al Saud** (Saudi Arabia) said that his country devoted special attention to the rights of children, in keeping with the principles of its Constitution and of the Islamic sharia. It had established a National Commission for Child Welfare in 1979. The Government provided free education and also financed cultural centres, libraries and media institutions designed to help children develop their talents. Parents were required by law to protect their children from harm, and special institutions had been established to care for orphans and children with special needs or chronic illnesses. There were over 250 charitable organizations for children throughout the country. The Government was taking measures to reduce infant mortality, including polio vaccinations, and provided assistance to children with psychological problems.

96. Saudi Arabia had adopted a child protection law that prohibited physical, sexual and psychological violence against children, as well as parental neglect of a child's health or education. Since 2009, a national electronic child abuse register had been in use to collect data and monitor suspected perpetrators, and a hotline had been established to report incidents of domestic violence.

97. Saudi Arabia was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two Protocols thereto, and to International Labour Organization Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour. It had adopted a human trafficking law that penalized the exploitation of children for labour or begging. The Kingdom was also a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Islam of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. He called on the international community to intervene to protect the rights of children in all conflict zones, including Occupied Palestinian Territory, where children continued to be subjected to murder, torture and human rights violations by the Israeli occupation authorities.

98. **Mr. El Mkhantar** (Morocco) said that his Government had organized the Fourth Arab High-level Conference on the Rights of the Child in December 2010, resulting in the Marrakech Declaration, which had been adopted at the Arab League Summit in March 2012.

99. Since Morocco's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993, the age of criminal responsibility had been raised to 18, child courts had been set up, an act on abandoned children had been introduced, and it had become illegal for children under 15 to work. A 2006-2015 National Childhood Action Plan had been introduced as part of the United Nations initiative "A world fit for children". To represent and protect children, the National Congress on the Rights of the Child, the Children's Parliament and the National Children's Rights Observatory had been created.

100. His Government had introduced an annual literacy strategy, the aim of which was to reduce the school drop-out rate to zero by 2015. As a result of the 2009-2012 National Emergency Programme, the age at which children started attending school had fallen and education had become mandatory until the age of 15.

101. Measures had been taken for children with disabilities to receive professional training and become integrated into the national education system. The child mortality rate was currently 36 for every 1,000 births; the target of reducing it by two thirds by 2015 was thus feasible. Health care and equal access to education for the very poor had been improved through the Medical Assistance Scheme (RAMED).

102. Violence against children received special attention in the National Childhood Action Plan. Support units for child victims of violence had been set up at law courts and hospitals.

103. **Ms. Mørch Smith** (Norway) said that her delegation was concerned by the exclusion, discrimination and resulting loss of basic rights suffered by indigenous children. It agreed with the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/225) that those rights could be upheld through constitutional amendments. Her Government believed that constitutional inclusion was a step towards guaranteeing the inclusion of indigenous groups, as illustrated by the protection of the Saami peoples under the Norwegian Constitution.

104. Her delegation welcomed the report's focus on education, but was concerned that indigenous children were vulnerable to discrimination. A Norwegian study of Mong and Khmer communities in Viet Nam had backed up the finding that mother-tongue education increased performance at primary level. Research had shown that better results were achieved in second languages where mother-tongue instruction was the norm for the first six to eight years of schooling.

105. Her delegation commended the report for highlighting that discrimination and inaccessibility hindered indigenous children's access to health care, and noted the good practices of Australia, Mexico and Brazil.

106. Children should be included in decision-making processes. Participation encouraged them to become active citizens, gave their concerns visibility, developed their capacities and self-esteem, and led to better decision-making.

107. The traditional practices of early marriage and female genital mutilation, however, were harmful and impeded gender equality and children's rights. There were limits to the respect which could be shown for such practices.

108. Her delegation shared the concern voiced in the report regarding the lack of birth registration in indigenous communities. Birth registration would improve literacy and protect children from armed conflict.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.